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ABSTRACT

Reading is construed as operating within the dynamics of the relationship of reader, text, context, and language system. Context is understood as the cultural and situational environment of the text, itself a semantic unit that is an instance of the language system. A related variable for reading is the awareness of the reader of the language system. An understanding of the modes of language, oral and written, and the differences between these, is a factor in reading skill. This factor can be exemplified in the way written language construes the dynamic world as object, and the resulting abstraction in text makes significant demands on readers. Classroom practices arising from this approach include examining texts to show how meaning is constructed. Appropriate learning activities, which have been trialled, include analysis and synthesizing of narratives, where students actively deconstruct and reconstruct texts. Three examples of text are attached. (Contains 17 references.) (Author)

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DEVELOPING READING: THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC FORM AND SOCIAL CONTEXT IN CONSTRUCTING MEANING

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Reading: linguistic form and social context.

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Abstract

Reading is construed as operating within the dynamics of the relationship of reader, text, context and language system. Context is understood as the cultural and situational environment of the text, itself a semantic unit that is an instance of the language system. A related variable for reading is the awareness of the reader of the language system. An understanding of the modes of language, oral and written, and the differences between these, is a factor in reading skill. This factor can be exemplified in the way written language construes the dynamic world as object, and the resulting abstraction in text makes significant demands on readers.

Classroom practices arising from this approach include examining texts to show how meaning is constructed. Appropriate learning activities, which have been trialled, include analysis and synthesising of narratives, where students actively deconstruct and reconstruct texts.

DEVELOPING READING: THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC FORM AND SOCIAL CONTEXT IN CONSTRUCTING MEANING

1. NEGOTIATING WRITTEN TEXT: THE NEED FOR EXPLICITNESS

a. Language, context and text

Whenever we respond to or engage with texts we are involved in an experience which is an experience with language. 'Reading between the lines', that homely cliche about the locus of meaning in written text, is an attempt to point up the position taken here - we need to get in 'behind the scene' of the view that depicts reading as simply the interaction of reader and text. It will be argued that getting behind the scene requires us to take into account two other aspects of reading: the *context* of both reader and text, and the *language system* that underlies the text. Reading, therefore, relates the writer and the text to a reader, and it is successful to the extent that the reader can construe the systematic relationship that exists between text and context. It is this relationship between the coding of the language of the text and the coding of the context that makes it possible for the reader to understand, to interpret the possible meanings that are the product of the relationship. We are usually aware of the influence of context on text, but because we are immersed in our own language without thinking about it, like fish in a linguistic sea, we can easily avoid seeing the critical part that an awareness of language plays in competent reading.

There are, therefore, four factors to be considered here: the writer, the text, the reader (with their reading) and the context. Writers, to begin with, create their texts and in doing so are influenced by their own discursive history and social position, adopting and foregrounding a set of meanings that are important to them. Their text will therefore be an attempt to effectively coerce the reader into adopting their own position within the culture, the natural and unproblematic reading that complies with the position of the writer. Such reading positions always have ideological overtones which can usually be

seen in connection with attitudes towards class, race, gender and age. Readers have also built up a model of social reality, depending on their social position, together with a coding orientation or tendency to mean in certain ways (and therefore not in others). These cultural factors will determine the way the reader will construct the situation in which the text was produced, while this reading will also be done within the framework of the reader's own, external situation that is determined by the cultural constraints already discussed.

b. Context of culture

The written text itself is a stretch of language that functions effectively in its context, like any other text. The most general environment in which the text was created and where it functions is a nonverbal one comprised of the *culture* itself, a set of possible meanings valued by the members of the culture. In our case we are concerned with Western, capitalist and technologically oriented values and meanings, a particular *social semiotic* or system of meanings operating at a level above the language system. Dress, music and painting are examples of our culture's social semiotic, but language is that aspect of the semiotic that we are concerned with here. As well, each of us is socialised (through the medium of language) within this cultural semiotic. It is now being recognised that we use language in cultural contexts where we wish to achieve our purposes, and that to do this we have staged ways of achieving our purpose. Buying and selling, visiting the doctor, attending a lecture and countless other social activities are patterned in this staged manner, where we begin the transaction in some specific way and progress through a series of conventional steps to the end point of the activity. Thus the influence of the culture can be seen in these *generically structured* social activities that use language as part of the action itself (Martin, 1985).

c. Context of situation

More specific than the cultural context and functioning within it is the *context of situation*, the immediate environment of the text that derives its meanings from the context of culture. It has been more fully elaborated within the framework of Halliday's theory of register (Halliday, 1976) in terms of the variables of *field, tenor* and *mode* .

It is the systematic correspondence between the text and its context of situation that makes reading possible, since the language features of any text have been selected so as to link up with the features of the situational context.

We can illustrate this text/context dependence by considering some texts and noting how we unconsciously infer a context from them. When we see 'Any more fares, please' we think of a bus or tram conductor moving amongst the passengers, while 'The synoptic chart at noon today shows a pattern of high pressure over the whole continent' can be seen as part of the weather forecast on radio or TV. 'The Purchaser shall be deemed to have waived any objection or requisition which he has not made and delivered to the Vendor…' is part of a clause from a Land Sale Contract, and is a record that is meant to be kept rather than closely read every time it is used. Notice that the situation mentioned here is actually a situation type, not an actual physical situation, and note also that situations are actually social constructs, not 'the reality out there' that can somehow be empirically determined.

The situational variables of field, tenor and mode systematically affect the actual language choices made in these texts, thus enabling us to predict from one to the other, in both directions. The field is reflected in lexical items, for example 'fares', 'synoptic chart', 'requisition' while tenor choices express attitude, for example 'please', and mode affects the way the whole text is put together ('he' is used to refer back to 'Purchaser' and thus tie the two participants together cohesively).

The text/context relationship is therefore a dialectical one, for not only does the context determine the meanings exchanged but it is also created by the meanings that we have developed within the broader context of culture. The ultimate importance of the context of culture can therefore be seen, and we can also see how the origin of meaning for any text is to be found outside of it, in its environment, a generator of meanings that are encoded in language. While this model may appear to be deterministic, it is important to see that the system is in fact permeable, and that the social structures can apply pressure for change which introduces a dynamism into the model sketched out here.

The final aspect of the environment of a text is its verbal environment, the whole set of previous texts that are extant and shared by the participants in the exchange of meanings. This notion of *intertextuality* is another contributor to the context of a text, for none of us are entirely original, depending as we all do on the texts that have already been produced and that contribute often unconsciously to our present discursive position. In an important sense no text is ever the work of one individual.

d. A linguistic model of reading

We can now briefly describe what goes on when the reader engages in the task of reading. Of course it is clear that good readers are active, making predictions from context about what is to be expected in a text and what is to come next, constructing possible meanings from their assumptions derived from the context of situation. This active processing is a decoding activity in the sense that the 'expressions' (the graphic display represents these) are taken in by the grammar of English and unpacked from their carefully organised structures, and then sorted into meanings (Halliday, 1985a). The reader may comply with the reading position that the writer has adopted, so 'getting the meaning', the 'natural' reading position. Thus in younger children's stories there is sometimes a hero figure who manages to overcome adversity and 'live happily ever after', a position that is usually readily accepted by younger readers. So strong is this reading position that even with more deliberately subversive texts, such as the 'Paper bag princess' (Munsch,1980), we find that the final picture that shows the princess running off into the sunset alone, after rejecting the prince, is interpreted by young readers as a search for the prince whom she wishes to marry! (Davies, 1989). Thus the actual reading constructed by the reader is socially and linguistically determined - the two factors are inseparable, as ought to be apparent by now.

Are we to say that all readings are compliant in this sense? There is of course an alternative, one which points up the essentially ideological character of all reading. Readers can be helped to resist the natural reading position constructed in the text and learn to reconstruct it in ways useful to themselves. Here reading will involve the reconstruction of the text by means of a distancing process that is possible when the

reader either has or is helped to have a different discourse orientation to the writer's, so that one ideological position is actually reconstructed as another. This, of course, is the essential requirement for literary criticism and also applies to the task of reading history. The key point to be made here is that any reading that the reader produces is socially determined. All meanings are constructed within a social reality and are social acts, both components of social action and symbolic representations of them.

d. The role of knowledge about language in reading development The part played by an understanding of knowledge about language in all of this discussion ought by now to be apparent. We are arguing that awareness of language and how we use it, on the part of the learners, makes a significant contribution to the development of their ability to *use* it. We have seen that the demands made on the reader are to some extent linguistic demands, and we need to be able to model the role of language in reading (and writing) in some economical way. In fact the model underlying much of the present discussion is one developed in systemic-functional linguistics that emerged from the work of Halliday and his colleagues in register theory and in discourse studies (Halliday, 1985b; Martin, in press). The enormous advantage of using a model of language such as this is that it clearly explicates how language varies according to social and cultural context, and has been quite deliberately designed to clarify educational issues and contribute to educational practice. Systemic-functional theory is a social theory, a theory of human experience as socially constructed, and of the role of language in that experience. Within this approach language is seen as a tool for mapping our experience - like a calculus to explain our world. The role of a functional grammar - a lexicogrammar - is to investigate and clarify both *what* we mean and *how* we do so, the two being inseparable. (Christie, 1990)

However language itself can be rendered invisible in the classroom by a focus, for instance, on literature alone, where the emphasis on literary art can quite overshadow, and render opaque, the linguistic means by which the artistry is actually achieved. If explicit knowledge of language were made more visible in classroom practice it could be used more effectively as a resource by learners. We have proceeded

for too long on the assumption that knowledge about language is not relevant to the business of learning in the classroom. We have rightly asserted the primacy of meaning, but have wrongly concluded that explicit knowledge of how language forms construct meaning is not relevant to the needs of learners. As a result we have disadvantaged many students, particularly those whose language development has involved a coding orientation that is not as well oriented to the language of schooling as that of their peers. Certainly we have been right to reject the traditional and word-class based grammars but now that we have a useable approach exemplified in Halliday's functional model of linguistics it is timely to look at the ways in which an understanding of functional linguistics can illuminate and improve our teaching of reading. This meaning based approach to language in written form provides us with a number of principles for teaching reading more effectively.

2. SOME LINGUISTIC BASES FOR UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN TEXT

a. Awareness of the language modes - differences between oral and written language

Of course, when students enter the high school, they have had considerable experience in the use of English, and in varying degrees have built up a largely unconscious awareness of how spoken language can be used to achieve different purposes. Indeed if we lived in an oral language culture that would be quite sufficient. But the characteristics of writing have introduced a new dimension of human experience, as we know (e.g., Olson, 1977; Halliday, 1985a). This means that it is not enough to treat language as if it was only represented by the passing, rapidly fading and relatively impermanent phenomenon of speech. The written mode places new demands on learners, demands that learners have only partly mastered in the elementary school.

A major responsibility of English teachers - of all teachers - is to help students with this transition from the oral to the written culture. Speech is used in face to face encounters in conversations, recounts of experiences and in many learning situations, and is created jointly by the participants who share the context and contribute to the fluid development of the message. Various features of the sound system of the

language also contribute to the meanings negotiated, and interlocutors can back-track, pause and correct what they are saying,

Writing on the other hand has evolved to carry out quite different purposes and can be read by anyone who might be far removed from the author. Essentially a written text must be independent of the context of its production. Because of the 'synoptic' characteristic of written language we are able to think and learn quite differently when using it. Writing is more fixed, dense, available for continued perusal, and therefore is a cause of reflectiveness on the part of the reader and writer. When students first enter the elementary school they are likely to apply the strategies that they have already developed for learning speech to the task of learning to read (and write). Many new approaches to teaching initial literacy capitalise on the existing strategies children possess (e..g. Goodman, 1980 Smith, 1982). These have some value during the earliest stages of the transition from home to school, but the characteristics of writing are different enough from speech to require the learner to learn to use new strategies quickly. Writing, after all, is used in quite different contexts from those of speaking and for very different purposes, and draws on very different linguistic resources of vocabulary and of grammar.

b. Arresting reality: construing the dynamic world as object

Getting control of written language involves the user in seeing the world in a different way - a world which looks a little like writing itself. Instead of making meaning about the world using the choreographed, fluid and dynamic characteristics of speech developing readers, it is argued, can increasingly come to see their world as chunked, objectified, static and comprised of things rather than processes. Written language enables us to study the world because writing has frozen it, and in the process we find that we are reconstructing the world through writing.

This shift occurs partly because written language is characterised by the phenomenon of nominalisation, where we tend to express ourselves using nominal

structures ('nouns') in place of the usual process ('verb') or qualifier ('adjective', 'adverb') items that are characteristic of speech. While in writing we find:

> "In developing countries the conservative **pressure** on qualitative **change** was, at first, **unwitting** and came from the insistent **demand** for more schools, whatever **effect** this might have on **quality**." (grammatical metaphor in bold) (Beeby, C. E., 1988),

this would translate into speech as something like:

> " When countries are developing, conservatives pressed at first to change things qualitatively although they did not realise that they were doing this; this happened when people insistently demanded more schools, yet these people did not care if this made better or worse schools".

Notice first that the spoken version is longer than the written (it could be unpacked even more); it is obvious that something has happened in the workings of language that has made one much shorter than and different from the other. We need to find out what is happening here in the vocabulary and the grammar (the 'lexico-grammar').

First let us look at the vocabulary. The nominalisations involve a transfer in the grammar, from a dependence on verbs to carry the processes (which is what we normally do in speech), to the expression of these processes in nouns, which of course are normally understood by hearers not as processes ('verbs'), but as things or objects ('nouns'). Further, having made the processes into objects we can now think of *them* as objects, and even go a step further and make the objects themselves the subjects of processes; in this example 'pressure' can 'come' and 'demand ' can 'have' an 'effect.' The essential point here is that nouns are now foregrounded in the text, in that they have taken over to some extent the semantic load of the verbs; they become more prominent and so dominate in the semantics in a way that brings about a changed emphasis in the ways we mean in writing. The nominalisations are quite unusual in everyday speech, being much more characteristic of writing. They have the effect of presenting the meaning more densely, so that when first encountered in writing they

present problems to readers, particularly the younger ones. This is because younger children's texts tend to be more 'congruent', ie., lacking in grammatical shifts - called 'grammatical metaphor'- such as is found in nominalisation.

There are good reasons for our culture's use of nominalisation in writing. They are particularly suitable for expressing the many abstract ideas that are important in the various subjects and disciplines. Writers need them so as to be able to develop arguments at a theoretical level. Nominalisation is also an effective way of presenting processes (in the verbs) as 'natural' objects rather than culturally determined actions - and actions of people. By naturalising the arguments we can make them more plausible to the readers. Nominalisation is a favourite device of newspaper writers who can naturalise unusual and unnatural events like wars and major economic changes.

A further difference is to be found in vocabulary, in particular in the lexical or 'content' items - in the first example above, 'developing', 'countries', 'conservative', 'pressure', 'qualitative', 'change' etc. This class of vocabulary is to be contrasted with grammatical items, which have the function of linking together the lexical items - 'in', 'the', 'on', 'and' etc. You can see how the lexical items predominate in the first example (17, in 3 clauses: a ratio of about 5:1), while they are not as prominent in the second, more spoken one (21, in 8 clauses: a ratio of about 2:1). Here we see how the 'lexical density' of written language rises quite dramatically. This is characteristic of the grammar of writing. It occurs mainly because the nominal groups ('phrases' in traditional grammar) are lengthier with descriptive language packed up densely (e.g. 'the conservative pressure on qualitative change'). This enables the writer to pack in the information and places a corresponding load on the reader to process this quantum of information.

Another difference between speech and writing is that we are able to see the latter as an object. The very fact that written language is static and frozen enables us to examine and re-examine it, while it lies on the table, so to speak. Writers know that they can come back to a text and view it from another perspective; but the important thing is that the text is an 'it' which is always available for inspection. There is a sense

in which this makes language more concrete for the user, since it becomes visible, for the first time; however the written form does place new demands on the user because of the phenomenon of grammatical metaphor (of which nominalisation is an example) and of lexical density.

c. Dealing with knowledge as abstraction: the significance of a metalanguage.

The effect of all this is to make written language much more abstract, so that it places different demands on learners as they encounter it more and more at school, both in comprehending (reading texts and other resources) and in composing (writing, including writing for assessment). This new consciousness and new way of learning must be met by a willingness on the part of teachers to raise learners' awareness of language, so that they can more deliberately control it, both for the mastery of literature but also for more effective learning throughout the curriculum. What is important here is to decide on an appropriate *metalanguage* , a shared language for talking about language and texts for use in the classroom. Here we are not concerned with the formal grammars of the past which did not clarify the function of language in making meaning, but a functional model of language that explains how meaning is made in context and to achieve our purposes.

An essential element in this process is the role of teachers who themselves are aware of how language works to make meaning throughout the subjects of the curriculum. They can assist the language development of their learners, by being quite explicit about language itself as central to learning. They will be aware that there is a movement in the child's development from the relatively unconscious learning of the oral phase of language development to the increasingly conscious learning that is initiated by their first encounters with print. And this movement should be matched by appropriate conceptions of the teacher's role, which may be seen as becoming more and more explicit about language. The teacher needs to be able to introduce to the class a shared language for talking about language and learning, building on the stock of this special register that the learner already possesses. Teachers who are aware of this need

can point out how texts are constructed as a whole, focussing on the beginning-middle-end (or *generic*) patterns of narratives, drama, and the various factual text types such as argument, discussion, description and report. We can introduce terms that express the functional purpose of language, such as 'Report' to describe a piece of factual writing that focusses on phenomena of the world around us, and include terms like 'description' to indicate the detailed information that we provide in it. Here is a young child's comment on another's report: 'That's a good *report*, Guy. I can tell what you are writing about from the *description*. It's a gecko lizard' (Rothery, J, in Martin and Rothery,1986). These children have used these functional terms about language with their teacher in the Elementary school in just the same way that they were learning to talk about other new learnings in Mathematics, Music or Health.

Much of the discussion so far may be summed up in this diagram:

LANGUAGE MODE	LEARNING MODE	ADULT ROLE	KNOWLEDGE
ORAL-PROCESS	LESS CONSCIOUS	IMPLICIT	COMMONSENSE
WRITTEN-OBJECT	MORE CONSCIOUS	EXPLICIT	DISCIPLINES

In conclusion we must note that there are two aspects concerning our use of a metalanguage for learning here. First there are the terms we will use to talk about the *generic structure* of the texts learners have to read, as in the report example mentioned above, and second, the expressions used to discuss the detailed *language features* of the register with which we are concerned. For a more detailed example of a functional language model that outlines appropriate generic and linguistic (ie., grammatical) terms, see the glossary in Knapp and Callaghan, *Teaching Factual Writing - The discussion genre,* (1989). In this booklet there are also many other examples of functionally oriented terms for language generally, all of them appropriate to the types of texts that are important in English classrooms.

3. LINGUISTIC BASES OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE

a. Language in the transition from Elementary to High school

i. The emergence of the ability to come to terms with grammatical metaphor

In a recent study of a grade 6 class's language development concerned with the demands made on them in the last year of their elementary schooling we have found that, by this stage of their schooling, there are of course many signs of the children mastering a number of the demands of written language (Winser, 1990; Derewianka,1990). Quite clearly at this stage they are able to read and produce texts that are capable of standing on their own, independent of immediate context, and that are in many ways successful in achieving their purposes. We can see in the example below that the writer successfully adopts the newspaper report form, introducing the reader to the subject of the piece and developing the topic competently.

Example (Science in Sport)

What is interesting is to see is that this writer is able to deploy the resource of nominalisation successfully here. In writing that 'Not only does **science** help, but regular **coaching** has great advantages...', and '**Reviewing** problems and **fixing** them will help' we see how he has been able to crystallise the processes normally expressed in verbs (nominalisations in bold). A more spoken variant of the last paragraph would be:

> If we review our problems and fix them we will help
> Australia to be recognised throughout the world because
> its athletes perform so well.

In nominalising these processes he is able to thematise them by making them the topical theme of these sentences, an invaluable skill in dealing with abstractions. He is thereby

freed to give these objectified notions an agentive role in the text, with science now being able to 'help', as can 'reviewing' and 'fixing'.

However we must also note that this developmental level is not proving to be very marked in the texts of this class. The piece cited above comes from a class newspaper to which all of the class contributed, and a survey of the texts reveals that there are virtually no other examples of grammatical metaphor in this class's work. A large sample of the class's written work for the second half of their year has been given a preliminary survey and there are not many signs of the emergence of the use of grammatical metaphor in this broader sample either. We may partly attribute this to the types of texts that were available to be read in this classroom, ie. to the *context* of learning in this school. These published texts were quite representative of many elementary 6th grade classes, consisting of a mix of narrative, fantasy, poetry and various factual types. There were not many examples of specifically technical writing in this classroom, and the major theme of a good deal of the work for a quite large proportion of this time was provided by a computer programme which was focussed on Captain Cook's voyages of exploration. This programme introduced subject areas such as history and geography, but the writing throughout is relatively non-abstract and congruent and does not use grammatical metaphor to the extent that might be expected in writing about history and geography. These are subjects that use nominalisation as an important part of their armoury for making abstract and powerful meanings that are essential for dealing with the subject matter of these disciplines, as recent work in high school writing has shown (Eggins, Martin & Wignell, 1987).

ii. Grammatical metaphor in the High school.

When this student progressed to high school in the following year he joined a class where the various subjects of the curriculum were taken by subject specialists, including a History teacher. The same student wrote the following piece, as part of an activity which followed up the viewing of a video concerning the discovery of Tollund Man in Denmark.The students were required to write a letter to an archaeologist, taking

on the identity of chief archaeologist at the Tollund site, and explaining what information they had discovered.

Tollund Man letter (Neilson)

Note that once again this student is able to deploy the resource of grammatical metaphor in this text. The teacher regarded this as a very competent text (' a well written letter'), and awarded it a high grade (80%). Another student wrote a more substantial text which contains a high concentration grammatical metaphor:

Tollund Man letter (Cox)

This student's text was warmly received by the teacher - 'this is a very impressive piece of writing…' - and received a mark of 100%. It is plainly regarded as highly appropriate and meets the teacher's expectations of writing like a historian with great competence. This student is able to marshal this particular resource of History writing whereby we nominalise actions, give things existence and then making the things act in their own right, all powerful and essential ways of making meaning in historical discourse.

So this text raises the questions of central concern here: how has this student come to terms with the field of history, as exemplified in these texts? How has this sort of text emerged from the school context? We can say that the teacher himself was a specialist teacher with a background in the study of history itself, and that the texts the teacher used in the classroom as part of this series of lessons were good *models* of historical writing. In fact one of the published texts the teacher used was actually read out to the class. It contains a number of nominalisations and is a reasonable example of history writing in that it not only outlines the events but also makes interpretive comments on the events. We can therefore see how important it is that we use appropriate models of texts in our classrooms, ones that embody the discourse of the

subject matter we wish to teach and that enable the students to come to terms with the specialised language of the discipline concerned.

Some teachers may react to the second letter above by claiming that the writer had merely paraphrased, or perhaps more seriously, 'plagiarised' the texts he had heard or had been reading. It is not uncommon to hear the expression 'Put in in your own words' from teachers when asking for reports and essays. Wignell (Eggins et al,1987: 8) quotes a high school teacher who may be quite representative here: 'Most of the time they just copy out chunks. Occasionally you'll get one or two who'll write it *in their own words* (my emphasis), but they don't have that skill when they come to high school...'. After carefully observing many teachers and children in one high school he concludes that the students are put into a double bind: should they copy and possibly be penalised, or change the language and risk getting it wrong? The students resolve the problem by copying and trying their best to make it look as though they haven't! One pointed out that '...the textbook's kind of like a professor's kind of writing and when you read it out it doesn't sound right', a most perceptive comment showing that in fact what is involved here is the students' ability to make the shift from spoken language (what would be OK if you simply said it) and written language - 'a professor's kind of writing'.

What is readily apparent from Wignell's study is that teachers in high schools, hard pressed by demands to cover the content of the syllabus, spend minimal time with their students on questions of the language structure of the texts students read (and write). It is of crucial importance to go further than the relatively passive provision of models and to actively assist students by working through texts *with them* , pointing out their overall schematic structure and language features explicitly to the students, using appropriate, functional terms such as those we have been using here.

b. Examining *how* language makes meaning: studying text purposes and structure through explicit modelling

In this section we examine how some teachers have focussed on the generic structure of typical texts used in English classrooms so as to explicate their social

purpose arising from their broad, cultural context. The aim of such teaching is to enable students to see how meaning is made at the whole text level by means of characteristic stages that are conventional in our culture.

Recent work studying quite young children's writing development is now showing quite clearly that from the earliest stages of literacy development children are able to appreciate how we use language to achieve our social purposes when we write. In a study of a grade two class Rothery (Martin & Rothery,1986) has pointed out that these children are assisted in their literacy development by an explicit focus on the staging of narratives, using a fairly simple schema (which of course is only one of many schemata that can be used to examine the structure of narrative texts). She quotes the comment of one child who was 'using knowledge of narrative structure to shape her own writing' (p. 125):

> J. R. So once he got into trouble because he broke a...
>
> Child. ...precious vase
>
> J. R. And then what happened?
>
> Child. Then what happened
>
> J., R. Yes, what's going to happen to the giant. I mean he's got into trouble.
>
> Child. Then the giant went home.
>
> J. R. OK
>
> Child. That can't be because it didn't get sorted out.

The child shows in the last remark that she was aware of the text structure in that there was a need to resolve the problem she had set up with the giant who had already got into trouble. After this exchange she proceeded to develop a more satisfactory solution to the problem she had previously incorporated into her text.

If grade two children can be helped to appreciate how texts are structured to achieve their purpose then clearly this is possible with high school students. Rather

than leave them to try to sort out as best they can what is involved in the staging of successful texts we can play our part as English teachers by explicitly focussing attention on the purposes of texts and their generic structure. What is involved here is the notion that we need to both deconstruct and construct a text if we are to read it successfully. While deconstruction is a sophisticated idea that involves quite advanced skills of literary analysis, we can work towards this by helping our students develop analytic skills that work at all levels of a text. The cultural context of a text needs to be discussed here; why do we have advertisements, soap operas, poems and Mills and Boon romances? Many literary texts' purpose is primarily to stimulate the reader by focussing on human experience, whereas more factual, transactional writing has the purpose of informing the reader. At this level ideological questions often arise: is the author trying to propagandise? What assumptions are made, that it is assumed we will agree with? Are these hidden? What implications do they have for gender, class, politico-economic and racial issues?

Then an analysis can continue with lessons which have students examine the overall structure of the text. The beginning-middle-end pattern of texts takes many forms but these forms are not arbitrary. They take the pattern they do for functional reasons, ie. to achieve their purpose most effectively in our culture. We begin a purchase in a shop with an enquiry for goods and their price, not a discussion of how to get the right change, because this is functional. Notice that in other cultures the price will be bargained for, thus introducing another element in the exchange. So a typical narrative (short story, novel, anecdote) may begin with a scene setting paragraph (or more), and build up to a climax and its resolution (or non-resolution), varying these elements of course according to the stylistic preferences of the author. By focussing on the text's structure we are helping students see how this particular text is actually at work, in a dynamic way, making meaning that we as readers must construct for ourselves.

c. Examples of teaching reading in a High school using this perspective

• A Grade10 analysis of a narrative, "All summer in a day". (Ray Bradbury)

Here the class followed up a modelling lesson with an analytic activity to determine the way this text realises its purpose. One group worked at the beginning of the text, and referred to language such as 'venus', 'classroom', 'tidal waves', 'the islands' and their 'desires for earth' to indicate that aspects of the setting were being presented.They also referred to the main character, Margo. They saw the problem of this narrative in psychological terms - 'because he doesn't believe her, sort of psychologically, maybe', as one student put it. Another said that this problem was also indicated by the stopping of the rain, which was a major event in this narrative (where the rain was almost continuous). 'And the rest would go under the resolution' pointed out another, proposing that the main character didn't manage to view the dry day that was so unusual. Another group reported that the problem began with '"it's stopping, it's stopping", which means the rain's stopping'. This group argued that there were a number of complications, with Margo being different, as an example. The release of Margo after the rain had resumed was seen as a major resolution to the piece.

One student, at the end of the group reporting session, claimed that there were some problems that were not resolved at all. For example, he said, the rain does continue on although it is clear that is not a satisfactory state of affairs for the inhabitants - 'it didn't turn out good at all, and she still doesn't fit in and we don't end up finding out if she ends up being right … and we don't find out if she goes back to earth or not'. He then goes on to conclude his critique of this piece - 'it would have been a better resolution if they had been, if they had let her out earlier on when the sun came out by some freak of nature or something'.

This is an important example of how students can readily use this analytic technique as a tool for serious criticism of texts, and can be dynamic and flexible in their use of this functional model of language. We are not proposing that students should mechanically carve up texts into predetermined patterns. It is most important to

stress that there are no clear cut patterns but only possibilities, hypotheses in fact which need to be sustained from the evidence in the text and context. Students can readily take up a position and move on, as this student did, to talk not only of the way the text was developed but of ways in which it *could have* been developed. This is a crucial insight for language users to develop and is one that we all seek in our work with literature.

• A Grade 9 analysis of a narrative, 'On Loan'.

In this lesson the class were only required to look at the early stages of the piece, and to make a case for their judgment about where the setting is established. The teacher reminded them that they were looking for 'time, characters and place, information, what the story is about so that you have a background knowledge to know what is going on when the complication arises'.

The groups reported back on their analysis, with one group claiming that 'on page three it started getting into the story, the main story and that, so we thought we got more information out of those pages [ie., in the orientation]'. Another pointed out that the first stage came to an end 'as they were walking to the stage [where one of the characters was to perform] they were showing how the family, Jeff and Danny and the mum were sitting there and the problem started after, after he introduced them, you know...'.

In this lesson there was substantial disagreement about the staging of the text, with one group deciding that the end of the first stage was at page three, while another thought it was at page seven. It was argued by the teacher that at least a hint of a complication was introduced early in the text, on page four, where one student agreed that there was a reference to a child in the narrative having 'almond eyes', a point which most readers missed as indicative of the ethnic background of this character. A follow up activity where the class examined the text for a complication that followed this orientation was to take place at a later lesson.

• A Grade 8/9 reconstruction of a one page narrative, 'The Life-Boat Men'.

With this class the task was to determine the sequence of this text by reordering its separated paragraphs; they also were asked to look for the generic structure of the text.

In one group the section with the heading was seized on as the first one, for obvious reasons. This group had a lot of difficulty in selecting the next paragraph, one suggesting that the indentations might be relevant. The expression 'About eight o'clock' was examined, but there were no other indicators of time, so this line was abandoned. Then the number of men clinging to the rails was explored as a clue, but not immediately followed up. One student pointed out that the lifeboat is initially waiting, 'so we don't know anything about it'. Another referred to the life boat's crew seeing what was happening, and that it said 'the remaining men', so that what happened to the others was unknown. They then isolate the problem: 'but it says in one of them that they are just about to jump'. 'OK, one man jumps successfully, that would be one and the life boat again after that?' They then decide that 'About eight o'clock' begins the piece and is followed by 'Seas were now sweeping right over the light ship', which shows a development from the 'huge sea swept over the light ship' of the first paragraph. They tried the final paragraph as next in the sequence, but it is pointed out that there it refers to the dangers not being over, while the earlier paragraph discusses a successful jump. Next a student notices the reference to the coxwain, who they decide is 'like the captain or something', and notice that he is referred to in another paragraph, so this provides them with a clue which is further supported by a reference to the numbers of men rescued and those still remaining. Then the final paragraph refers to the men being given first aid, which they infer must have taken place after the jumping has taken place.

They spent some time organising their reasons for the judgments they have made, and were then ready for the plenary session. This session followed and there was agreement amongst the class about the sequence until the second last paragraph was reached. Here one group argued that the piece would end best with the mention of first aid - 'because it makes everyone happy', to them an appropriate way to end a

piece. Then one student pointed out that 'if it's a true story it might not have a happy ending'.

The final activity in this lesson was a discussion of the structure of the piece. For an orientation students pointed out features like 'where they are (here, at a rock), and the date and time, both of which are given. Then one other element was raised, the people, here seen as the crew. Then one student mentioned a named character, 'Coxwain Sliney', who is only named later in the piece. This led to a discussion of the variability of schematic structure. Another student suggested that the problem becomes apparent at the point where it is mentioned that the lightship is getting very close to the rocks, and that a wind shift would lead to a shipwreck. Others point out that the mention of a fierce gale hints at a complication, while another says that the lightship's breaking from its moorings is a further development in the complication - yet it is apparent that the breaking of the moorings occurs right at the beginning, thus making it quite clear that schematic structures are not neat and tidy partitions of a text. The complication is then further extended when the problem of approaching the lightship is encountered, which is appreciated by the coxwain, as another student points out.

It is here that the class agree that the resolution to the problem begins. The problems in fact are solved one by one in this text, with the final one being their realisation that some of the rescued men were actually injured, with a solution appearing in the provision of first aid. Finally another problem appears with the realisation that some of the rescued crew are now hysterical, and need to be subdued by others aboard the lifeboat. Finally one student mentions that 'at the end it doesn't really tell you what's going to happen, it leaves you to imagine what's going to happen ... they are going to make it back to shore whatever happens'. Another student suggested that you can fill in your own ending, but another disagreed and claimed that 'it does matter because it's a true story. So it might have more paragraphs to come ... and it might be another problem and it could keep going but because it didn't keep going on you know they are OK'.

What is readily apparent here is the ability of this average class to apply themselves energetically and with some useful insights concerning the language features of this text so as to reveal its meanings and their significance. A focus on such textual features as have been involved here has been shown to assist the students to work most effectively at the task of interpreting and also evaluating literature, two tasks that are central and crucial to the teaching of English.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

1. Asserting the primacy of language in the study of English supports the essential centrality of the *text* itself, in its *context*. What the students are learning is that *meaning* is achieved through *form*.

2. It is the *context* within the classroom that teachers need to carefully consider by setting up appropriate activities that *explicitly* exemplify the purposes for using language and clarify the generic structure and language features of the texts being read.

2. In focussing more directly on language as the basis for English studies we find that the students are perfectly capable of looking at the language features of their texts, and that in the process they gain significant *insights* into the texts themselves. Thus we see how learning through language is inseparable from learning about language.

3. The students are involved at high levels of learning, by exercising *judgement* and by showing, at all levels of development and ability, that they can vigorously apply themselves in this way through argument, thus gaining more insights into language and literature.

4. From the teacher's point of view, there is a need to attend to the *linguistic features* of the texts that are being studied, so that these can be featured in the lessons of the sort we have described here. Some knowledge of the essential features of written language needs to be part of our armoury, so that we can recognise them in the texts we select and work with, and so that we can share a common language - a *metalanguage* - in our

interaction with our students. Such language terminology is just as essential for English studies as it is in the other subjects of the curriculum, and has the same empowering function for the students.

5. The *whole curriculum* is essentially the area of application of this means of study. Wherever there is language involved in learning, these principles will be central to teaching and learning.

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SCIENCE IN SPORT

During recent years, Australian athletes have been using science to perfect their techniques.

They have been using scientists like sport psychologists, biochemists, physiologists, medicine specialists and many more, to help them perform to the best of their abilities.

Not only does science help, but regular coaching by specialised coaches has great advantages such as doing well in international events like the olympics.

Reviewing problems and fixing them will help Australia become recognised as a world-wide sporting contender.

Reporter: James H

Dear Ian Stead,

I am James N , Head Archeologist at Tollund, Denmark. I am very excited at the discovery of "Pete Marsh". I have read all the facts about this discovery, and was amazed to find the similarities between Pete and a man found in a bog here in Tollund Fen. This "Tollund Man" also seemed to have been garotted - as he was found with a leather thong around his neck. Tollund Man's last meal was also spring seeds, and for this reason we believe he may have been ritually killed. Tollund Man was also dated at 500 B.C. These extraordinary similarities suggest that there is a definite link between the two bodies.

I hope you find this information interesting and useful.

Yours faithfully,
James N

Dr Stead
Chief Archeologist
Hackney

Assistant Archeologist
Tollund
3/8/90

Dear Sir,

I would like to forward some information which might assist you in your investigation into the discovery of Lindow Man in a Cheshire peat bog England.

Both bodies showed evidence of a violent death by hanging. Both Tollund man and Lindow man had a noose made of sinew which is tough fibrous tendon around their necks.

This method of punishment of Tollund man may have continued into the period of time when Lindow man lived and may have had some religious meaning.

Both bodies were found in a peat bog, one in Cheshire, England, and the other in Tollund. It cannot have been a common method of burial because there would have been other bodies found in the vicinity. So that method may have been a punishment. It may have been a slow death if the hanging was not the original cause of death.

They were both young, 25 to 30 years of age. I suggest Lindow may have been a ruler of his people. His features showed that he did very little manual work. I believe Tollund man may have been a priest as he was wearing a skin cap like some priests wear today. This could also relate to Lindow man because he had well cared for features, e.g. his fingernails which were well manicured. Lindow man may have also been a priest. Writings from that time suggest that each spring the Spring Goddess visited many North German tribes. According to my theory of Lindow man being a priest, he may have been a sacrifice to the Spring Goddess or, because of his refusal to follow the Spring Goddess, he may have been punished.

Both bodies were naked except that Tollund man had a skin cap and a smooth hide belt and traces of animal skin clothing.

This adds weight to my theory that both men were either punished or sacrificed. The fact that Lindow man's body displayed evidence of other brutal wounds also adds weight to my theory of punishment being the cause of death.

The fact that both bodies contained traces of cereal foods in their digestive could indicate that both men were involved in some kind of sacrifice where harvest food was offered to the Spring Goddess.

After examining all the available evidence, these are my final conclusions.

Yours faithfully,
Owen C